

THESIS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF



HARRIET. B. STOWE.

Leannah J. Paine.

'89. N. of J.

## Harriet Beecher Stowe.

In American literature no names stand higher than those of Cooper and Mrs. Stowe. Theme, more than form renders them imperishable, - first the Indian, then the Negro. Others may treat the subjects more profoundly, but none can hope to repeat their successes, for the conditions on which their writings are based will never recur, at least in this country.

Harriet Beecher was born at Litchfield, Conn., June 12, 1812, at that season when the air is laden with the perfume of roses. She was the second of a large family of children. So many of our noted authors and statesmen have come from the New England States, that we have learned to look upon those as the nursery of the great and learned people.

Litchfield was a beautiful hillside village, richly endowed with schools professional and scientific. Here lived



venerable judges and governors, learned lawyers and senators, and representatives both in National and State departments, with a population enlightened and respected."

Harriet's father, Reverend Lyman Beecher, was a deep thinker and very independently expressed his opinions on the topics of the day. Few women have a more sweet, gentle and self-controlled nature than had her mother. In her own words "she was one of those strong restful, yet widely sympathetic natures in whom all around seemed to find comfort and repose". Harriet was quite a small child when her mother passed into the better land. But the childish recollections of her mother were deepened and vivified by the intensity of the love and reverence in which her memory was held by every body, not only in the home but through-out the village and its surroundings.

When a step-mother came, with a shake of her brown curls, the child said. Because you have come and married

my father, when I am big enough I mean to go and marry your father". This threat was never fulfilled. The young wife had that pleasant disposition that soon gains the love of children and she trained them with the gentle, patient guidance of a mother. The friends of the home-circle were enlightened and pureminded. Thus surrounded, is it any wonder that some members of the family have distinctive characteristics that should stand out prominently when they reached maturity. Harriet was no exception. She attended the best schools of the state. What wonder that her natural character should grow and develop, strengthened by excellent home-training, till as the years passed by she became,

"A perfect woman nobly planned".

While in Litchfield under the tutelage of Miss Peirce and afterwards of Mr John Peirce Bruce her gift of composition developed. At the age of twelve years she wrote an essay on the subject "Can the Immortality of the Soul be Proved by



the Light of Nature." This was so good that her father when he heard it read asked who wrote it, and when told the expression on his face was such as to make it, as she says, the "proudest moment of my life." Her passion for writing increased to the distress of Miss Pierce. But Mr Bruce encouraged her, and she studied more earnestly. She read every thing she could lay her hands on, and sewed and knit diligently, says her brother Edward. Her interest in every thing passing on around her was very vivid. During this year the first great sadness fell upon her. Her eldest sister, Catharine, was engaged to a young graduate of Yale College. He went to Europe to spend a year traveling and studying. On his return he was to take a position in the College and they were to be married. The ship in which he sailed, sank and all on board perished. The light all died out of Catharine's life. It seemed she never could bear the duties and burdens of life again but that strength of character which belonged to all that family

sustained her and the result was the opening of a girls school at Hartford. Harriet spent three years there as a student and then became a teacher.

About this time Mr Beecher, finding he could not support his family on his salary, determined to seek a broader field, and in a few days he moved to Boston. His talent and genius became widely known. His sermons especially on intemperance and slavery thrilled the whole nation.

In 1832 he was made President of Lane Seminary, a theological school, near Cincinnati. Catherine and Harriet accompanied him and founded another school for girls, which they carried on successfully. In 1836 Harriet was married to Calvin E. Stowe a Professor in the "Seminary" and an accomplished scholar. Both continued their work teaching here for several years.

The years that immediately succeeded filled as they were with the duties devolving on the wife and mother, who must make the most of every penny - each day fraught with the intense



feeling of the nearness of the human nightmare, need not be dwelled upon.

Excitement ran high. On one side were those who believed it to be their duty to help their brothers escape from bondage. On the other raged the angry slave-holders and their sympathisers. Do you ask on which side Mrs. Stowe was found? The poor hunted creatures who escaped by her aid can tell. No child of Reverend Lyman Beecher could be a slave holder.

When we remember that the Stowe family slept with their fire-arms under their pillows to defend their lives, — when the Seminary was attacked more than once by an angry mob because of the discussions of the slavery question there; when we think of all the work and anxiety that fell upon this woman, the time necessary to teach her own children, and the time she spent teaching the little colored boys and girls near her, her whole heart stirred with the injustice of keeping them from the public schools; we can not but wonder at the heroism

which made any outside work possible to accomplish. Yet during this time she wrote several stories and sketches for the Cincinnati Gazette, which were afterwards published in a volume called the "Mayflower".

Her literary career began with the publishing of a "New England Story" for which she received a prize of fifty dollars. In 1850 Professor Stowe accepted a position in Bowdoin College, Me., and thither the family moved. The Fugitive Slave Law was being agitated. The heart rending stories of the broken and deserted homes of the colored people, the cries of the woe-stricken ones dragged from those they loved into slavery roused the people. Although the Stowe family never lived in a slave state they lived far enough south to know that these stories were true. Did they remain silent when this great evil was going on? No indeed!

Truthfully it has been said that never is there a great wrong to be righted, never a revolution from moral night to



light to be accomplished, never a great social, political, or religious step to be made, never a people to be led out of bondage but that when the time is ripe some strong soul will be found led by the Infinite to point out the way with a power that may not be overborne or denied. History both sacred and secular proves it.

Luther, Washington, Lincoln, Grant, Whittier and Gladstone are such characters. Who can doubt that Mrs. Stowe stands in this place in regard to slavery. No one can think of her apart from her great work "Uncle Tom's Cabin". You know her family history, the cares and wants she endured, how she wrestled day and night with her feelings, we may almost call it Spiritual Inspiration till her path was clearly marked out and she began her "story of stories" which was written in heart and brain and flowed from her pen in words that "burned with living fire."

The story was first published in the National Era, a paper published in Washington, by Do-Baile, who knew Mrs. Stowe in

Cincinnati; it at once awakened great excitement. Through his influence the book was published. Deeply depressed when the work was accomplished little thought the author of the mighty work it was to accomplish. It was issued in March, 1852, and within ten days twenty thousand copies were sold. The cry on all sides was for more. Before the year was over three hundred thousand copies were sold. It crossed the waters and as there was no copy-right it was translated into nearly all the languages of Europe - from America to Arabia - till the great world's heart throbbed responsively to the authors. It has been dramatized and acted in nearly every theater of the world.

The scene of the book is in the Southern States and vividly represents the life of the people there. St. Clare is one of those good moral men, who if they were only Christians would do so much good in the world. He is a man of talents and education, high-minded, generous and impulsive. The circumstances that developed his talents are well shown.



Maria, his wife, is represented as a "society belle" in her youth  
 passing a 'butterfly life' and later a disappointed, fretful invalid,  
 who thought more of her own comfort and pleasure than  
 of anything else. This character is probably overdrawn. Ophelia  
 is a conscientious, practical, kindhearted and energetic New  
 England woman who regards 'shiftlessness' as one of the crimes  
 of life. The Sheldons are worthy, common-place people. Le-  
 gree is a monster. The evil of his nature is painted in strong  
 colors. The details of his career do not need to <sup>be</sup> brought out  
 clearer to make the reader turn from him with horror and  
 earnestly pray never to meet such a monster. The pencil  
 that drew From de Boruf or Dick Halbrad would have made  
 him start from the canvass.

Eva is the very perfection of childish beauty and innocence.  
 She is one of the prettiest characters ever portrayed. Some  
 such children are here always. Who reads this story with-  
 out thinking of some little child that resembles this picture,

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- not in every particular, but so closely that this one seems real. Uncle Tom half believed as he saw her peeping over from among the cotton bales that she was an angel of the New Testament. Is it any wonder that when she saw and heard of the cruel treatment of the slaves that 'these things sink deep into my heart.

Uncle Tom is a faithful, obedient servant, ever willing and ready to do anything for those in authority if it did not come between him and his duty to God. What more should be asked? What more was asked. When almost at death's door. "I can die!" "Mas'r if you were sick, or in trouble, or dying and I could save ye, I'd give ye my heart's blood; and if taking every drop of blood in this poor ~~body~~ would save your precious soul, I'd give 'em freely, as the Lord gave his for me. O Mas'r, don't bring this great sin on your soul! It will hurt you more than 't will me! Do the worst you can, my troubles 'll soon be over; then as kind friends stood beside him, two days



later, rebuking his persecutors with his last breath says - "Hush, Mas'r George, it worries me. Don't feel so. He an't done me no real harm - only opened the gate of the kingdom for me; that's all!" - "Who - who - who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

This quotation, with the following ones will give some idea of Mrs. Stowe's style.

St. Clare's villa was an East Indian cottage; surrounded by light verandahs of bamboo-work, and opening on all sides into gardens and pleasure grounds. The common sitting room opened on to a large garden, fragrant with every picturesque plant and flower of the tropics, where winding paths ran down to the very shores of the lake, whose silvery sheet of water lay there rising and falling in the sunbeams - a picture never for an hour the same, yet every hour more beautiful.

It is, <sup>now</sup> one of those intensely golden sunsets which kindles the whole horizon into one blaze of glory, and makes the water another sky. The lake lay in rosy or golden streaks, save where white-winged vessels glid

-ed hither and thither, like so many spirits, and little golden stars twinkled through the glow, and looked down at themselves as they tumbled in the water." With this beautiful description we can see the lake and its surroundings, and the little mossy seat in the garden where Eva and Uncle Tom were accustomed to sit on a Sunday afternoon while she read to him from her little Bible.

"Come down here, cousin; I've something to show you," called St. Clare, from the foot of the stairs, one morning.

"What is 'it'?" said Miss Ophelia, coming down with her sewing in hand. "I've made a purchase for your department - see here," said St. Clare. "Augustine, what in the world have you brought that thing here for?"

"For you to educate, to be sure. You're always preaching about educating. I thought I would make you a present of a fresh caught specimen, and let you try your hand on her and bring her up in the way she should go."

"I don't want her. I am sure; I have more to do with 'em



now than I want to."

That's you Christiane, all over, 'You'll get up a society and get some poor missionary to spend all his days among just such heathen. But let me see one of you that would take one into your house with you, and take the labour of their conversion on yourselves! No; when it comes to that they are dirty and disagreeable and its too much care and so on.' That struck the right chord. Miss Ophelia saw the need of true missionary work and bravely she went to work to do it. Her efforts were crowned with success. Many who who reads this feel the truth of the words, and much real missionary work has been done and more will be done in the future.

"How old are you Topsy?" questions Miss Ophelia before her first lesson and while forming plans for her instruction.

"I am no, Missis," --- "Don't know how old you are? Did 'nt anybody ever tell you?" --- "Who was your mother?" "Never had none" said the child. --- "Never had ~~any~~ mother?" What do you mean?" Where were you born?" asks Miss Ophelia again. "Never was born," persisted

Lopsy." Who reads this conversation, or that description of Aunt Dora's defensive tactics, without being struck with the drollery of the speeches and pitying the poor ignorant creatures.

But let us follow Uncle Tom. We find him resting among the cotton-bales his Bible spread out before him, and slowly pointing to each word as he traces out its promises, and half pronouncing reads - Let - not - your - heart - be - troubled. In my - Father's - house - are - many - mansions. I - go - to - prepare a - place - for you - " What comfort in those words to him, away from friends and kindred.

What more touching than the scene in Eva's chamber, when all the household are gathered to hear her last words that she must speak.

"I sent for you <sup>all</sup> my dear friends, because I love you, I love you all and I have something to say to you which I want you always to remember. --- I am going to leave you, in a few more weeks, you will see me no more. --- If you love



and you must not interrupt me so. Listen to what I say - I want to speak to you about your souls. Many of you, I am afraid, are very careless. You are thinking about this world. I want you to remember that there is a beautiful world where Jesus is. I am going there; it is for you as much as me. If you want to go there, you must not live idle, careless, thoughtless lives; you must be Christians. You must remember that each one of you can become angels, and be angels forever - - - Jesus will help you. You must pray to him; you must read. - - then remembering that they could not read she hid her face and wept. But soon smiling again she continues - - "I have prayed for you and I know Jesus will help you. Ask him to help you every day and get your Bibles read to you whenever you can; and I think I shall see you in heaven." After the sobbing had ceased she continues,

"I know you all love me". - - - There is not one of you that has n't been very kind to me; and I want to give you something that when you look at, you shall always remember me. I'm going to give all of

you a curl of my hair; and, when you look at it, think that I loved you and am gone to heaven, and that I want to see you all there."

It is impossible to describe the scene as, with tears and sobs they gathered round the little creature and took from her hands what seemed to them the last token mark of her love."

After the servants had left the room, the family remained near her and the father being roused from his grief by the gentle voice of Eva, cried,

"I can not," he said. "I cannot have it so; 'The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me!' This is the way people of the world take affliction. How true to life it is. They never think of the mercies they are continually receiving but as soon as one blessing is taken from them, they bemoan their troubles, not thinking that the who gave may take away."

I know not what most to admire in this story; the bold repudiation of wrong doing, the exhibition of Christian fortitude and love and charity under injury and suffering,



the graphic power of description, the exquisite pathos, irresistible drollery or masterly exhibition of human character.

Never had a book such a history. It seems as the voice of God speaking through one of his children. Its echoes still resound; they have not ceased. Recently six hundred thousand copies were sold by a London publisher. This book brought means of rest to the weary woman, and she and her husband went to Europe the next year. Every where she was received with hearty welcome. Gifts were showered upon her. Kings and potentates vied with the common people in praises.

Upon her return she resumed her work. Few writers have been more prolific than she. "Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin" appeared in 1853. This was in response to numerous enquiries concerning the characters in Uncle Tom's Cabin and gives the names and dates of many of the circumstances recorded, so that there is no doubt of the truth of the statements.

"Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands" appeared soon after. In 1856 "Dred, the Tale of the Dismal Swamp". The character of Dred is more grand and picturesque than that of Uncle Tom but the work only produced a slight impression on the people.

"The Ministers Wooing" was first published in the Atlantic Monthly, and in book form in 1857. The scene of the story is in Newport, Conn. and represents the life of New England people during the first half of the last century. All the characters (except Aaron Burr, whom the author very wisely does not say much about) are among the finest of her creation. I like this story better than any other of her stories.

"Agnes of Sorrento" and "Pearl of Orr's Island" came next. Then a number of juvenile works. "House and Home Papers". "The Chimney Corner" and "Little Foxes" and "Inver Little People" in 1867. "Old Town Folks" 1867. "My Wife and I" in 1868 also the "True Story of Lady Byron's Life" which critics say should not have been published.



All her books contain some admirable qualities and several of them have enough merit in themselves to have given her a place among our first authors of fiction.

She is a novelist of rare and original genius. She is indebted to no special culture and to no careful practice for her effects. In attention to the niceties of detail she is surpassed by many authors of inferior rank. In variety of knowledge, eloquence, imaginative power and spirited delineation of life she is inferior to Hawthorne. She leaves no "mysteries" around her characters. Her descriptions are like the etchings of old paintings; the process and method of detail could not be improved but at due distance the effect is magical; the design priceless and imperishable. Truth to human nature more than any thing else makes the novel great. Mrs Stowe has this power. L. D. Cleveland gives us her characterization. "Knowledge of human nature, power of description, tone of Christian morality, truthfulness to God

and humanity, richness and beauty of thought and language."

Macaulay, when he read Mrs. Stowe's great work, expressed his opinion in his diary as follows, "Uncle Tom's Cabin is a powerful and disagreeable book; too dark and Spagnioletto-like for my taste, when considered as a work of art. But on the whole it is the most valuable addition that America has made to English literature." The last part we may consider as very good praise for an English critic, for American literature was not well received there at that time.

Mrs. Stowe's great idea, her great purpose, her chief aim was to reveal slavery to the world in its true character and thus promote the cause of abolition.

She was a sentinel in earth's dark night. With stout heart she patiently battled for the right. No blast of trumpet or roll of drum was needed to call her to her duty. She bore neither sword nor gun. "The pen is mightier than the sword."

The great curse has been taken away. Slavery abolished.



It will not help the country or the nation now to ask whether it would have been better for the Negroes if they had been placed in a colony by themselves. This is a question that can not be answered satisfactorily. The colonization of the Indians did not accomplish all that was expected from it. At all events the amalgamation of the races should be prohibited. The time may come when they will separate by mutual consent.

But our ancestors brought the Negroes here and kept them. They are among us, we must do the best we can to promote the welfare of our country and that of each individual in it and this idea is already shaping the public policy in respect to the negro. Free schools are founded for their benefit. They are admitted to our schools, colleges, and universities and may enjoy all the privileges of education. Is the country any worse for it? Is not the country far better than when slavery existed? The race is improving as rapid-

ly as could be expected. It will be generations before the negro attains the morality and intellectual heights of the white race, if he ever does. The prejudices of caste will disappear in the light of Christianity only when the white race regards their superiority over the colored one as a result of education and enlightenment and one which they should use to aid their weaker brother and to instill in the young minds of this dark race the principles of truth and honesty of purpose in every department of life, and of impressing their hearts with the necessity of trust in and obedience to Him who is the author of all things.

The long conflict, before the abolition of Slavery is spoken of as the late "unpleasantness." Truly named. Oh would that the "unpleasantness" with all its sad memories could be blotted out of this Nation's history forever. But,

Let the dead past bury its dead.

Act, act in the living present.



Heart within and God o'erhead."

Yes, that is the right way to do. With the life blood of America's noblest soul freedom has been twice gained. The night is passed. May another like never darken the day. The morning star of Liberty shines brighter. May it never grow dim.

We can not tell how much praise is due Mrs. Stowe. The historians of the United States in speaking of the causes which led to the overthrow of slavery will always give much credit to the author of the drama in which the results of the system were exhibited to the world in their true character.

Thomas Jefferson in speaking of Mrs Stowe's books, says, "There are few, excepting those who are greatly prejudiced, that will rise from a perusal of the book with out being a truer and better Christian, and a more humane and benevolent man."

Mrs. Stowe is still living. Her husband and several children have passed away. She has been very ill lately.

Her bodily health is slowly improving but her mind has suffered. She can no longer recognize her friends. The genius which made "Uncle Tom's Cabin," the most popular book of the century has departed. Several of the family passed the closing years of their life under a mental cloud. But whatever her fate she has built for herself a monument far more enduring than marble.

